

**Editorials**

**History's Lesson**

Newspaper people realize that nothing that is published will please everyone. So it is with "Our Catholic Heritage," the continuing series on Catholic Church history appearing in the Courier-Journal. But although there has been some adverse reaction, there has been much more warm response, some parishes even using it in Religious Education.

"There is nothing new under the sun," intoned the rather morose Ecclesiastes in Scripture, and there is truth in the statement. Reading history confirms this.

For instance, in the Dec. 9 segment of "Heritage" we read about a pope who in extremely difficult times rose to prominence in his homeland by exercising masterful political skills. A magistrate at 35, he entered religious life and eventually became the pontiff at a time when his homeland was in shambles, beset by famine, wretched administration, enemies from without — a man armed with only the spirit of the Gospel to confront the most dire of worldly situations.

The description could pass for our present pope, John Paul II. But, no, it was Gregory the Great, pope from 590 to 605. And it is very possible that John Paul II utilizes some of the lessons provided by Gregory the Great as he faces similar situations today. The Sixth Century pope cultivated good relations with the invaders, the Lombards, Visigoths and Franks. He spent vast sums on ransoming captives and on public relief. He went out widely into the world through his emissaries, much like our present pope who uses the advantages of modern travel to go personally. He was famous for his writings and sermons on pastoral care and for his interest in the liturgy.

The similarities persist and perhaps the most direct is provided by a quote from Gregory the Great: "When we administer necessities to the needy, we give them what is their own, not what is ours. We pay a debt of justice, rather than do a work of mercy."

John Paul II might easily have said that.

Perhaps the subtle lesson is that worldly life really doesn't change that much. The great ship of Church moving through the centuries will always face adversity and it shall survive. There is peace in that realization.

**Advice to Writers**

In the spirit of Christmas, may we offer some advice to contributors to our Opinion page. What we have to say does not apply to the vast majority of letter-writers. Letters come in a variety of shades — some recognize the good about us, others pass along advice, many are in gratitude for goodness performed, and many are concerned with the issues of the day.

All are welcome in the spirit of Vatican II which declares: "Free dialogue within the Church does no injury to her unity and solidarity. It nurtures concord and the meeting of minds by permitting the free play of the variations of public opinion. But in order that this dialogue may go in the right direction, it is essential that charity is in command even when there are differing views."

The Church is charged with the responsibility of providing forums for public opinion which also happens to be in the interest of good journalism in general.

Thus, the Courier-Journal not only allows your opinions but encourages them in our newspaper.

Most contributors, far from being problematic are necessary components of the newspaper. Our counsel, then, is directed to those who, in taking issue with others, do so in vitriolic attack. Wrong-doing is fit material for exposure but the adage must apply — find fault with the sin, not the sinner.

We receive letters whose writers affix their names to the rankst of condemnation, not of the Hitlers among us but of decent neighbors who simply do not live up to the writers' expectations.

Not only is this essentially wrong but pragmatically it scores a goose-egg. The idea of criticism is to effect change or to persuade; self-righteous invective is incapable of either.

God gave all of us the right to think and presumably expects us to do so. We mortals also should grant others that right.

Conversely, let us not be so thin-skinned that when someone disagrees with us, we cut back with caustic and personal retort.

We should learn to recognize the warm and comfortable flush of self-righteousness and use care in flaunting it, for it is always recognizable and repelling.

Good taste is one of the prime prerequisites for our Opinion page and, unfortunately, most letters rejected fail this test. Jesus, alone among the historical population of the world, had the impeccable right to criticize and He did so sparingly. But when He did, it was unmistakable.

"Whoever calls his brother 'You good-for-nothing!' will be brought before the Council, and whoever calls his brother a worthless fool will be in danger of going to hell."

Some writers who condemn their fellows do so out of a sense of "religious duty."

Jesus had this to say: "Make certain you do not perform your religious duties in public, so that people see what you do. If you do these things publicly, you will not have any reward from your Father in heaven."

And, of course, Jesus reserved his harshest disapproval for the hypocrite, first cousin to the self-righteous judge.

"Why do you look to the speck in your brother's eye, but pay no attention to the log in your own eye ... You hypocrite!"

Simply put, there might be two guidelines from different perspectives. All people are creatures of God, made in His image. We should think seriously before we find fault with others. Or, we are all sinners, and before we publicly point out our neighbor's faults, we should consider our own.

Or, as it was put most clearly: "Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone!"

**and Opinions**

**Baha'is Further Persecuted**

Editor:

The Office of Public Affairs at the Baha'i National Center gratefully acknowledges your expression of concern and support for the hard-pressed Baha'i religious minority in Iran. Your editorial comment in the Nov. 4 edition of the Courier Journal demonstrates that the world conscience is not inured to violence, genocide and religious persecution.

We regret to report, however, that since the appearance of your editorial, the

plight of the Iranian Baha'i community has deteriorated significantly. During the fall, six Baha'is were executed in Tehran and Darun for practicing their religion. In recent months, hapless Baha'i villagers in Iran's rural areas have been subjected to cruel intimidation tactics aimed at forcing them to recant their faith. They have suffered summary arrests, confiscation of their personal property, kidnapping and the destruction of their homes. Thirty-one Baha'i employees of Pepsi Cola are fired from their jobs unless they repudiate their faith. In a confidential memo, Iranian authorities instructed all consular officials abroad to

collect the names of all Baha'is residing outside Iran. These events have stirred grave concern in the worldwide Baha'i community for the survival of the Baha'i faith in the land of its origin.

We sincerely appreciate your determination to bring this heinous episode of religious persecution to the attention of your readership.

**Parks Scott**  
Public Affairs Officer  
Baha'i Office of Public Affairs  
Wilmette, Ill. 60091

**Changing The Language**

Editor:

A recent news item informed us that Pope John Paul II gave permission to the U.S. Catholic Bishops to change the language in the consecration of the Mass. The phrase that Christ's blood was "shed for all men" will be changed to "shed for all."

This will surely tickle the E.R.A. people, but one fact has been conveniently overlooked. All the Bible accounts of the Last Supper have Christ using the phrase, "shed for many." There is a world of difference between the words "all" and "many."

The Vatican Council of Pope Paul VI in all its wisdom had the effrontery to change Christ's words to suit our "separated brethren." Now that's incredible!

**Neil Murray**  
59 Harvey Lane  
Spencerport, N.Y. 14559

**Plastic Bullet Must Be Banned**

Editor:

The killing and maiming of innocent people is deplorable, whether inflicted by IRA mail bombs or British North Ireland Forces' plastic bullets.

The plastic bullet is a solid opaque cylinder, four inches long and 5.4 oz. in weight, which has a velocity of 200 mph and can pulverize a brick. There is a long, sordid record of the misuse of this weapon by British troops and the Royal Ulster Constabulary in North Ireland. Its victims, numbering in the hundreds, range from toddlers to elderly women, hardly the stuff that rioters are made of. Some have been killed and others maimed by this monstrosity.

I fervently request that your readers join in a protest of this lethal missile. I suggest that they boycott all products of the Wilkinson Sword Group (razor blades, etc.) which owns Schermuly, Ltd. (England), the company that manufactures the plastics and sells them to the English government and its North Ireland lackeys. The parent company is Allegheny International, Oliver Building, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15222. A deluge of letters to Allegheny International plus a boycott of products might end the atrocities against our Catholic brothers, sisters and children in Northern Ireland.

**Dick Mullaney**  
39 Sunnyside Lane  
North Chili, N.Y. 14514

**Fr. Louis J. Hohman**



*The Open Window*

**Divorced Can Receive Sacraments**

Dear Father Hohman:

Is it true that divorced people may not receive Holy Communion? How come there are so many more people getting annulments today than a few years ago?

Dear Reader:

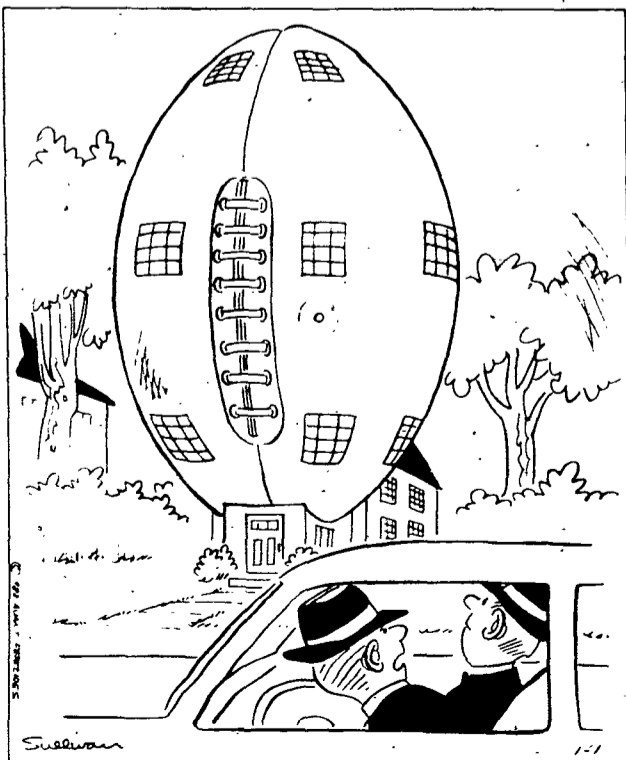
There are unfortunately many people who have the impression that if they have had a divorce, they are automatically disqualified from receiving the Sacraments. That is not true. If a divorce were an unwarranted one in the sense of being a kind of desertion of one spouse by the other, then the one who deserted would not be allowed to receive Holy Communion. But, in most situations of divorce, there are strong reasons why the couple cannot live together.

Where there has been no remarriage on the part of one or another, the ones who have not been remarried are definitely eligible to receive the Sacraments. It is the remarriage, in the light of an already existing marriage which has not been proved

invalid, which brings about ineligibility to receive Holy Communion. In other words, as long as the first marriage is considered valid, any remarriage would be invalid, and would therefore place the person in a state which would at least legally preclude the reception of the Sacraments.

The reason the number of annulments (or more properly declarations of nullity) have increased is that in the light of development in the science of psychology the reasons for an annulment have grown in number. So, for example, psychological immaturity, the inability to form a community of love which would be a Christian marriage, constitutes a very definite reason for declaring a marriage invalid in the first place.

The recognition of this kind of a reason has indeed multiplied the number of annulments considerably but does not in any way mean that the Church takes a less serious view of marriage or is simply becoming more lenient in regard to its ideal of an indissoluble marriage. If a marriage doesn't exist, it doesn't exist — no matter how much the Church would like it to exist.



"THEY SPLIT SHORTLY AFTER HE BUILT THE HOUSE."

Fr. Pau  
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